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ABSTRACT

This issue focuses on continuing vocational education (CVE) in Germany. Articles are: "Lifelong Learning in the Knowledge Society;" "The Foundations of CVE in Germany"; "Who Takes Part in Continuing Education?"; "Hail Maria! A Helping Hand for Female Academics Seeking Promotion"; "Sponsors and Forms of Continuing Education"; "The New Media the Current Issue for Continuing Education"; "An Instinctive Feel for Alternative Careers in Information Technology: Vocational Qualification by the Nuremberg University Team"; "Building Blocks for a New World: Multimedia 'Driving License'"; "Multimedia in Children's Rooms: Vocational Continuing Education for Teachers in Child Daycare Centers"; "Lifelong Learning As an Issue for Education Policy"; "'The Danger of Missing out' Interview with Matthias Berninger"; and "Quality Assurance in Continuing Education." (YLB)

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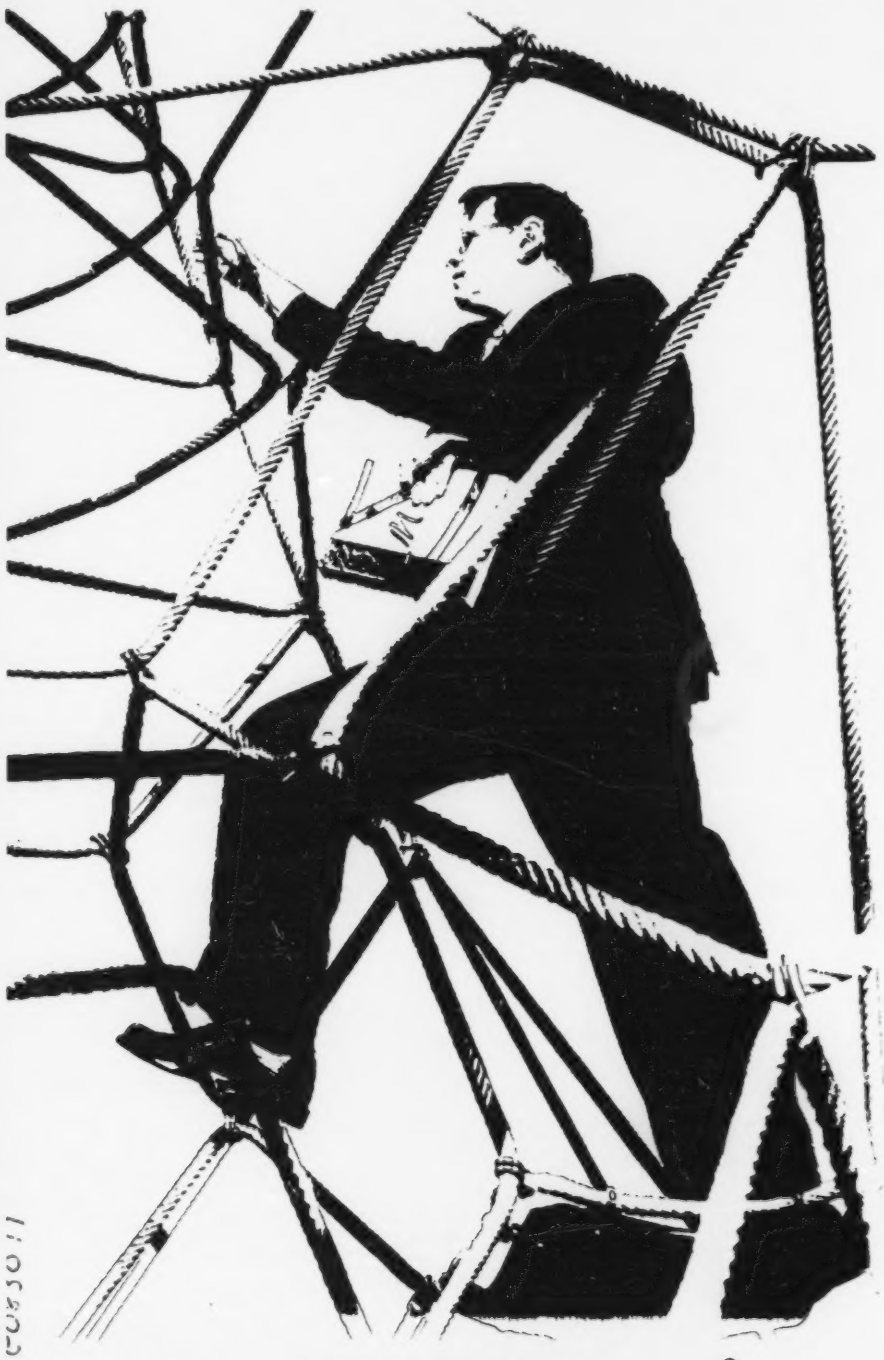

Continuing Vocational Education in Germany

Foundations

Sponsors

The New Media

Quality Assurance

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by Elisabeth Oehler

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LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

From Zen mediation for people needing relaxation to rhetoric courses for managers, from Qi Gong for people seeking the meaning of life to an introduction to Java script for electronic engineers: the German term *Weiterbildung* [continuing education] encompasses all possible forms of adult education. However, over the last few years the trend has been to associate contining education less with the "soft" forms of adult education and much rather to think of systematically planned, professionally organised educational events that in particular aim at professional qualifications.

In principle, this is certainly linked to the rising demands of the labour market, but specifically above all the digitisation of the world of work. No other technical development has caused such restructuring within the short period of less than 20 years as this process, which has affected not only our professional lives, but has had an equal impact on our private lives. However, at work it has created changes felt by practically every employed person, that even affect the very essence of people. Because without a knowledge of computers and skills in the field of electronic media, such as the internet and e-mail, prospects on the labour market are ever gloomier. Some job adverts are now tailored to applicants who can contact the advertisers only via the digital path of e-mail. In some sectors, stating a postal address has already become completely out of the ordinary, there are even companies whose job adverts can only be found on relevant internet sites.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the so-called fourth sector of the German education system has become so much more important within the last few years, especially as far as vocational education is concerned. Because no matter how quickly digitisation has become part of modern working life, the ponderous education sectors of initial and basic training, such as schools and the dual system – whose curricula are subject to constant state inspection and licensing procedures – have not been able to adapt to the new learning requirements. But even if this had happened within a very short period, the adults who were already working would not have benefited from the new learning material. They had to and still have to turn to offers in the continuing education sector not governed by the state. Whether in the private sector or financed by individual companies, IT courses are among the most popular continuing education courses.

This rapid development has caused education politicians in most major German parties to examine the field of continuing education more closely and to increase its importance in comparison to the other fields of education. For example, Krista Sager, Senator for Science and Research (*Grüne Alternative Liste*, GAL) [Green Alternative List] is convinced that "the knowledge intensity of products and services is growing, innovation cycles are speeding up and the amount of information that is available increasingly quickly is growing." She went on to say that this would require an increase in educational time, which would then have to be spread across whole lives, unlike in the past. "Continuing education must increase in importance in comparison to initial training."

Although the education politicians from the various parties broadly agree in this respect, there is to date no consensus on how continuing education can be better incorporated in the future. What is undisputed among the politicians and 90% of the population is that lifelong learning is indispensable today. "The announcement of a willingness to take part in continuing education has become a modern virtue: it goes hand in hand with flexibility and creativity", is how Philipp Gonon, Professor for Educational Science and In-house Vocational Continuing Education at Trier University, describes the new phenomenon. But the education expert does not see a risk to society here: "Learning throughout a whole life is completely natural on the one hand: after all, we can't help but process new material and constantly continue to learn. On the other hand, only certain learning activities are recognised and rewarded by society. An understanding of this kind indicates that learning in everyday life and throughout a whole life may not only be experienced as a pleasure and a positive challenge, but also as a social compulsion."

Continuing education expert Karl-Heinz Heinemann from the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* criticises the fact that the demand of "Education for All" has almost imperceptibly become a compulsion to learn. "Anyone who does not constantly keep up to date in his profession is left by the wayside. Instead of self-determination the

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exact opposite is the result of this type of self-controlled learning. Determination from other sources, not only at work but also in the rest of one's life."

Philipp Gonan does not therefore advocate permanent learning, which is what we do anyway, but to "learn something that is recognised as learning." However, that is easier said than done. Because with over 35,000 providers of continuing education registered with the *Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft* (IW) [Institute of German Business] in Cologne, it will probably be difficult for every person interested in continuing education to find the right course for themselves here that will then be positively assessed or recognised by a potential employer. The state deregulation of the continuing education sector is certainly the greatest problem in assessing the quality of continuing education measures. On the other hand, many education experts expressly welcome the fact that the fourth educational sector, which carries on from completed, state governed training, is characterised by the plurality of its sponsors and different licensing requirements. Because only these properties could guarantee the flexible reaction to spontaneous needs for continuing education caused by the labour market and thus secure Germany as a place to do business, argue many entrepreneurs.

PHOTO: LICHTENSCHEIDT

There have now been lively discussions about setting up a *"Stiftung Bildungstest"* [Education Test Foundation] along the lines of the established and successful *"Stiftung Warentest"* [Product Test Foundation], which should enforce recognised standards in continuing education and thus ensure transparency, quality and consumer protection in continuing education. Comparable to the German *Technischer Überwachungs-Verein* (TÜV) [Technical Inspection Authorities], which does not stipulate what car one should drive, but controls roadworthiness, the *"Stiftung Bildungstest"* should prescribe minimum standards for continuing education courses suitable for the labour market.

However dubious the current largely uncontrolled offers of continuing education in Germany may be, many education politicians are more concerned about the fact that half of all adults of working age make no use whatsoever of (institutional) continuing education offers than they are about quality assurance. One of the biggest challenges for current education policy must be to increase participation in continuing education along the lines of the much-vaunted philosophy of lifelong learning. In a society that increasingly defines itself in terms of knowledge, the acquisition of information and skills should be encouraged in all groups of the population. However, the current statistics from the Federal Ministry for Education and Science show that it is in particular people who already have above average school and vocational education qualifications who use the further offers, but not those who especially need continuing education in order to be able to improve their career and social prospects because they have relatively low qualifications. "Continuing education – as it works today – is not a compensation and harmonising instrument for missed opportunities in basic training, much rather existing selection mechanisms are reinforced and social inequalities are cemented", is the comment of the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics with regard to the situation in continuing education and it goes on to talk about a "myth of the learning society" in this context. Continuing education is currently serving only an elite of already well or extremely well educated classes of the population.

The Hamburg Science Senator sees "one way of addressing this problem in the creation of a right to continuing education for semi-skilled and unskilled workers." There is already a model for such a right: "The 1996 *Aufstiegsfortbildungsgesetz* (AFBG) [Promotion Continuing Education Act], the so-called *"Meister-Bafög"* [Master's Grant] is an instrument that should allow vocational continuing education and continuing education for promotion for skilled workers, regardless of their financial circumstances. The legal entitlement laid down in the AFBG aims at a specific professional group of journeymen and skilled workers who want to continue their vocational qualifications. However, from an education policy point of view, it is hard to see why there should be a legal entitlement of this kind only for this group and not also for the group of semi-skilled and unskilled workers."

The Federal Government, too, has set itself the objective of reducing the current education accumulation among those who are already well educated in favour of those with fewer qualifications. In the "Lifelong Learning for All" programme of action launched in January 2001 by Federal Education Minister Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD) it wants to promote lifelong learning for people with gaps in their initial training or who have not participated or only participated to a small degree in continuing education so far because of their situations. "The opportunities for the disadvantaged in terms of social and education policy to get higher qualifications should be extended, model projects to gain and develop skills for the unemployed and for people on parental leave should be carried out both within work (e.g. by means of job rotation) and in the social sphere (e.g. using new media) and vocational and general continuing education options for older people, for example, should be extended. In addition, the linguistic skills of immigrants should be encouraged and people with disabilities should be given greater opportunities for continuing education by using new media."

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY

PHOTO UCHTENHAGEN

"In view of the increasing acceleration of the economic, technological, social, ecological and cultural change in our society, continuing education is becoming ever more important. Continuing education is a suitable, necessary and indispensable contribution towards coping with these processes of change in the interest of those affected. The abilities, skills and competencies acquired in initial training will not be enough on their own in the long term."

From the Preamble of the
Rhineland-Palatinate
continuing education initiative
"Cornerstones and Individual
Elements of Continuing Education",
Ministry for Science and Continuing Education

Although continuing education is usually called the fourth pillar of the German education system behind schools, vocational training in the dual system (vocational school and company) and higher-education institutions, it is the largest education sector in Germany. Every year the state, companies and participants spend over DM 70 billion on lifelong learning after initial training. The lion's share of approx. DM 35 billion falls on the private sector. The money spent from public budgets in 1998 totalled around DM 25 billion. They comprise the expenditure of the Federal Institute for Employment, which subsidises measures for retraining and vocational continuing education pursuant to the *Arbeitsforderungsgesetz* [Labour Promotion Act], and thus provides targeted continuing education opportunities for the unemployed that are designed to enable them to return to the labour market. The remaining 5 billion comprise the expenditure of the Federation (around 1 billion), *Länder* and local authorities (around 2 billion each).

A considerable, and rising, proportion of the financing of continuing education is borne by private individuals themselves. An amount of approx. DM 10 billion has been estimated for the private contribution to participation in vocational continuing education in 1994.

Enshrining in law and the role of the state

The term "continuing education" has a very broad meaning in general German usage. Many education experts have very individual definitions of what is part of the sphere of continuing education and what not. This is undoubtedly because continuing education, unlike basic training, is not governed by the state. There is no right to continuing education covering all areas. On the contrary: a look at statutory standardisation shows that it is assigned to various areas of policy. The Basic Law does not contain any direct references to the area of continuing education. But the requirement for democracy means that there is an obligation for the state to ensure that there are educational offers that enable citizens to take an active part in life in society. As early as the 1970s various social politicians interpreted education as a "civil right". Although Article 7 of the Basic Law places the entire school system under the supervision of the state, continuing education is not subject to this state compulsion of recognition. Within the context of the general statutory provisions, private organisations can offer conti-

nuing education. This is linked to the state's decision of wanting to perform only a subsidiary function in the sector of continuing education. In other words, it takes on the tasks of continuing education that are considered to be necessary only where they cannot be performed by groups and institutions in society.

Specifically this has been enshrined in education legislation and in labour and social legislation. With respect to unifying the continuing education sector, the splitting of legal responsibilities has been frequently criticised and the question of a Federal Framework Act on Continuing Education has been thrown up. So far, however, an act of this kind has not yet been adopted. Although continuing education is recognised as part of the state education system and thus the voluntary undertaking for funding for continuing education from *Land* monies, there have so far hardly been any specific objectives for designing continuing education at a political level because the substantial autonomy of the various sponsors of continuing education should not be questioned. Unlike the school system and in ambivalence of the demands for equal treatment in continuing education alongside the other sectors of the German education system, the state does not take on any guarantee obligation for the offers of continuing education.

Definition of the German Education Council

Continuing education is primarily carried out by private providers of education who all have their own understanding of continuing education. It is therefore difficult to delimit the term and the substance of its meaning. However, as early as 1970 the *Deutscher Bildungsrat* [German Education Council] defined continuing education as the "continuation and resumption of organised learning after completion of various kinds of initial training phase". "The end of the first education phase and thus the start of possible continuing education is usually marked by the start of full employment ... Short-term learning or introduction at work is not part of continuing education", states the declaration of the German Education Council. This clearly means that only basic training from kindergarten to higher vocational training or a university qualification should be distinguished from continuing education. Continuing education and adult education are often used synonymously nowadays.

In the discussion about continuing education there is still controversy about whether less formalised expressions of the acquisition of knowledge should also be regarded as continuing education alongside classic continuing education in the form of courses. For example, these forms include visits to specialist trade fairs or congresses, self-teaching by observing and trying things out, self-controlled learning with the help of the media, reading specialist journals and books or taking part in quality circles. Usually the official statistics class only adults who have taken part in a continuing education course as people who have participated in continuing education. This is obviously associated with the fact that participation in courses can be proved and this makes the information more credible. The most comprehensive regular surveys on continuing education in Germany are documents in the "*Mikrozensus*" (Microcensus) of the Federal Statistics Office, Wiesbaden, and the "*Berichtssystem Weiterbildung*" (Continuing Education Reporting System) of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. In both of these reports, the figures on the public's participation in continuing education are based on the definition of continuing education as a course. Although serious involvement with good educational software or a textbook can certainly lead to just as much success as participation in a seminar or distance learning course, in the German education system the definition of continuing education that has established itself is the one that refers to learning in courses or seminars after completion of basic training.

General and vocational continuing education

Alongside the different understanding of this narrower and broader term of continuing education there are also different opinions on the definition of content. Whereas some people equate continuing education with vocational continu-

ing education and view it more in connection with labour market and economic policy issues, others emphasise personal development and social integration and thus the social function of continuing education. For example, the European Union White Paper is happy to view continuing education as an effective means of combating the employment problem or even as a requirement for the emergence of new growth models to create more jobs. Continuing education should offer all people, irrespective of their sex, age, education or social status, the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to cope with the social, economic and technological change of our society and to be able to help to shape it. Behind this understanding of continuing education is primarily the acquisition of knowledge for use at work. Depending on the profession in which one wants or needs to participate in continuing education, the contents of the vocational continuing education course can either be fundamentally general (e.g. the foundations of business economics for engineers) or very specific (e.g. new measuring techniques, programming languages, etc.).

However, the offers in the general continuing education sector are just as, if not more, popular. Education experts include courses on health issues, legal matters, household, education, family, languages, natural sciences, technology, the arts, politics, leisure activities and sport in the areas covered in general continuing education. In other words, everything that is part of so-called general education. Unlike courses in vocational continuing education, the courses in general continuing education are only voluntary and are attended in free time. The participants bear the costs of the courses themselves.

Primarily, vocational continuing education belongs to that sort of vocational training intended as an introduction to new subject areas, adaptation to current changes at work or personal promotion. In many plants and companies

regular continuing education offers for staff are now company policy. Unlike voluntary participation in general continuing education offers, participation in vocational continuing education schemes can be an obligation if it becomes a necessary requirement for a professional activity. The employer usually bears the costs of the courses.

Continuing education as compensation

Professional retraining to a recognised apprenticeship career or to start employment is a special aspect within vocational continuing education that is often also called "continuing education as compensation" by education experts. Participants in retraining schemes are usually employed or unemployed people who are aiming for qualifications that will allow them to move to a new job. The costs of recognised retraining schemes and a maintenance allowance for the duration of the retraining scheme are usually paid by the Federal Institute for Employment. An application for funding must be made to the competent employment exchange. In 2000 the employment exchanges spent approx. DM 14 billion on vocational continuing education.

Participants in vocational continuing education schemes in Germany

Features	Employed people 1998						
	Total		of which participation since 1997				
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Male	Female
	Thousand				Per cent		
Age from ... to under ... years							
15 – 20	1479	630	1080	458	19.7	11.4	8.4
20 – 25	3197	1421	1019	510	18.6	9.3	9.3
25 – 30	4489	2016	811	349	14.8	8.5	6.4
30 – 35	5847	2504	769	317	14.0	8.3	5.8
35 – 40	5633	2443	581	255	10.6	6.0	4.7
40 – 45	5244	2366	443	207	8.1	4.3	3.8
45 – 50	4929	2215	355	163	6.5	3.5	3.0
50 – 55	3812	1648	226	95	4.1	2.4	1.7
55 –	5633	2156	192	70	3.5	2.2	1.3
Total	40262	17399	5476	2425	100.0	55.9	44.4
Type of vocational continuing education							
At work, in company	•	•	2450	1075	44.7	25.1	19.6
At a Chamber of Industry and Commerce	•	•	194	70	3.5	2.3	1.3
In special continuing education or retraining centres	•	•	1481	691	27.1	14.4	12.6
At a vocational school or university	•	•	826	357	15.1	8.6	6.5
By distance learning	•	•	76	29	1.4	0.8	0.5
In another way	•	•	375	171	6.8	3.7	3.1
No response	•	•	74	32	1.4	0.8	0.6
Total	•	•	5476	2425	100.0	55.7	44.2
Duration of vocational continuing education							
Under 1 month	•	•	1278	530	23.3	14.8	9.7
1 to 6 months	•	•	270	122	4.9	2.7	2.2
6 to less than 12 months	•	•	173	97	3.2	1.4	1.8
1 year or longer	•	•	3689	1648	67.4	37.3	30.1
No response	•	•	66	28	1.2	0.7	0.5
Total	•	•	5476	2425	100.0	56.9	44.3

Source: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung [Federal Ministry for Education and Research]: Grund- und Strukturdaten 1999/2000 [Basic and Structural Data 1999/2000], Bonn 2000, p. 28

WHO TAKES PART IN CONTINUING EDUCATION?

Among all of the different opportunities for learning in the continuing education sector, from the individual method right up to the institutionalised, organised form of learning, adults with a high level of education are greatly over-represented. This can be seen from a report by the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics, to which the *"Berichtssystem Weiterbildung* VII" [Continuing Education Report System VII] of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in Germany repeatedly refers.

Three times as many people with a high level of education take part in continuing education courses as people without a relevant preliminary education. Also, the groups of the population that are already well trained benefit more from company promotional schemes than unskilled workers, to whom access to company continuing education is mostly denied. The needs for continuing education vary according to each particular situation. The proximity of the person concerned to the labour market is decisive. The greater a person is integrated in working life, the more probable their participation in continuing education schemes. Since far fewer women than men are employed full-time and occupy a high-level job, far fewer women take up continuing education offers than men. However, where men and women are in the same career situation, there is hardly any difference between them with regard to participation in career-oriented continuing education.

As far as age is concerned, it is mainly 25 to 54 year-olds who take part in continuing education schemes. For people under 25, some of whom are still in their apprenticeship, and for those over 55, continuing education is not an important issue.

The current situation of participation in continuing education

According to the current continuing education report from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, published in May 2000, almost every other 19-64 year-old took advantage of continuing education offers in 1997 (48 per cent). This means that in comparison to 1994, the rate of participation in continuing education rose by six percentage points. Nationwide, the statistics refer to 24.1 million participants in continuing education in 1997, equating to an increase of around 4.2 million participants since 1994. In particular, a look at longer term developments clearly illustrates that continuing education is a rapidly growing area. Whereas in 1979 the participation rate in continuing education was 23 per cent, 18 years later it is almost twice as high. In 1997 roughly one in three participants took part in two continuing education courses and one in eight attended three or more events.

Whereas in 1994 participation in continuing education in the old Federal *Lander* (Bremen, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, Saarland, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin) was higher than in the new *Länder* (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia), there is now no notable difference in overall continuing education participation rates between east and west Germany.

In 1997 31 per cent of 19-64 year-olds took part in general continuing education courses and offers nationwide. This means that the participation rate has risen by

five percentage points since 1994. In 1997 30 per cent of the same age group took part in vocational continuing education schemes. This is a rise of 6 percentage points since 1994.

Around 40 per cent of the total volume of vocational continuing education in 1997 occurred in the new Federal *Länder*. This proportion is around twice as high as the proportion of the population. The volume view shows the extent of continuing education efforts among the population in the new Federal *Länder*, who are reacting to the difficult situation on the labour market with greater participation in continuing education, more clearly than the participation rates. Whereas the average participants in the old Federal *Länder* invested only 101 hours in continuing education in 1997, the east German participants spent 212 hours, in other words more than twice as long.

On average, however, the 19-64 year-olds in the Federal Republic spend only 39 hours per year on vocational continuing education. Because far from all 19-64 year-olds take part in continuing education offers. 70 per cent of all German citizens between 19 and 64 years of age do not take part at all. The remaining 30 per cent of all 19-64 year-olds spend 128 hours per participant on continuing education schemes. Therefore, when the statistics speak of 39 hours of vocational continuing education per German citizen, this leads to a distorted image. Because over half of adult German citizens does not take part in any continuing education offers at all and the time spent on such a commitment differs greatly among the participants in continuing education.

The participants

Various factors determine who takes part in continuing education schemes, how often they do so and how much time they spend on them. In *"Berichtssystem Weiterbildung* VII" [Continuing Education Report System VII] distinctions are made between the people questioned according to sex, age, school-leaving qualifications, vocational training, professional status and branch of employment. For example, a lot more men (35 per cent) than women (26 per cent) take part in vocational continuing education. People with a university entrance qualification are encountered more frequently in continuing education courses than people who attended general secondary schools (4[illegible] and 19 per cent respectively). However, people who attended general secondary schools spend considerably more time on continuing education than people with university entrance qualifications, which is a result of the frequently time-intensive courses funded by the *Arbeitsförderungsgesetz* (AFG) [Labour Promotion Act]. Employed people take part in continuing education much more frequently than the unemployed, but they spend much less time on it as participants. However, in the new Federal *Länder* unemployed participants spend considerably more time on vocational continuing education than unemployed participants in the old Federal *Länder* and, in addition, they also take part in continuing education more frequently. This means that the time spent per unemployed person in the new *Länder* is around five times higher than in the old *Länder*, whereas the differences between employed people in the old and the new *Länder* are much smaller.

The Swiss Federal Office for Statistics has formulated the characteristics of a typical person active in continuing education as follows: "The typical participant in a course, a man or a woman, has a professional or university qualification, is [...] between 25 and 54 years old and is employed. He or she is undertaking continuing education for career reasons. The typical participant in *career-oriented* courses is a man with good basic training, he is often an academic, [illegible] between 25 and 54 years old and employed. IT, management courses and foreign languages are preferred subjects. He reads specialist literature and takes part in conferences and lectures."

Motivation factors

There are two fundamentally different reasons why someone takes up a continuing education offer. Either he voluntarily decides to take part because he wants to satisfy his individual interests in learning or, however, he feels subject to an external pressure for continuing education that he believes he cannot escape. In particu-

lar in the field of vocational continuing education it is sometimes the case that participation in a continuing education scheme is understood more as an obligation, especially when it is arranged or recommended by an employer or the employment exchange. In some companies, for example, there are "mandatory continuing education programmes" for people above a certain level. The threat of job losses or the feeling of no longer being up to the demands at work can be understood as an obligation to attend continuing education. Relevant surveys by education experts have shown that the following motivations lead to participation in continuing education schemes:

- Meeting new people
- Social acceptance and support
- Understanding of personal problems
- Improving relations
- Change from everyday life and daily duties
- Consolidation and reinforcement of expertise and knowledge
- Gaining insight into human interaction
- Wish or order from others
- Thirst for knowledge
- Enjoyment of learning

Whereas participants in general continuing education courses cite a search for "help in everyday life" or interest in certain issues as motivation, participants in vocational continuing education schemes express other motives for taking part. At the fore are job-related learning interests, such as: adaptation to new developments or requirements at work, avoiding deterioration at work as well as achieving career improvements. Much less frequently, participants in continuing education vocational courses cite an interest in acquiring knowledge that would allow them to start a new job (retraining). Interest in compensatory continuing education is expressed mainly by people without professional qualifications, whereas people with higher qualifications and younger people are more interested in adaptation and expanding existing knowledge. Within the context of a comparative study on regional continuing education realities among women in Germany, Italy and Spain, women cite the following reasons that have motivated them to take part in continuing education:

- A wish to return to work after bringing up children
- A need to catch up because of outdated basic training
- Fear of unemployment
- Improving promotion and career opportunities
- A change in career

According to *"Berichtssystem Weiterbildung* VII" [Continuing Education Report System VII] in 1997, something more than half of all vocational continuing education took place as a company decree or on the suggestion of superiors. Just under half were upon the initiative of the participants themselves. The frequency of participation in vocational continuing education upon one's own initiative, according to the continuing education report, varies considerably depending on socio-demographic and employment-related features. This means employed people with a higher education qualification take part in vocational training on their own initiative more frequently than employed people with a completed apprenticeship (61% v. 34%), women slightly more frequently than men (47% v. 40%), civil servants much more frequently than blue-collar workers (52% v. 17%) and Germans more frequently than foreigners (43% v. 33%).

On the whole, the attitude to continuing education is very positive in Germany. Nationwide, in 1997 92 per cent of all those questioned were of the opinion that everyone should be prepared to train further constantly. 83 per cent consider continuing education to be an important aid in coping better with everyday life. The proportion of people who believe that they have good opportunities at work even without continuing education has fallen continuously within the last ten years. Whereas in 1988 45 per cent of all those questioned still believed this, in 1997 this figure was only 34 per cent. But it is not only employed people who attach great importance to continuing education, but also companies. 97 per cent of large companies, 96 per cent of medium-sized and 95 per cent of small companies believe continuing education to be very important or important, as revealed by a survey within the context of the *Referenz-Betriebs-System* [Reference Company System] of the *Bundesinstituts für Berufsbildung* (BIBB) [Federal Institute for Vocational Training].

Barriers to continuing education

Even though continuing education enjoys an expressly positive image among the public, this by no way means that all adults take part in offers of this kind. On the contrary there are great differences in actual participation in continuing education schemes. Whereas 65 per cent of people with a university entrance qualification state that they take part in continuing education, the figure is only 34 per cent for people with lesser academic qualifications. The differences between people with a university degree and those without vocational training are even greater.

Federal Education Minister Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD) finds this situation worrying because she is convinced that "it is especially important for those with fewer qualifications [...] to gain more qualifications so that they can hold their own on the labour market in the long term." She therefore sees it as her task to eradicate "this split of the population into participants in the continuing education process and those who have not yet been addressed by continuing education offers".

A study of the continuing education conduct of adults in Switzerland (*"Warum Erwachsene (nicht) lernen"* [Why adults (don't) learn], Schräder-Naef, 1997) revealed various barriers to taking part in continuing education: a parental home where education was unimportant, troublesome or negative experience of school, financial, mental and time pressures, partnership and family, personal priorities and satisfaction with one's current situation at work.

As other studies show, the fear of being overtaxed in a course is another barrier to continuing education. Family obligations and the lack of childcare opportunities can also be important.

However, only 37 per cent of those questioned in Germany complained about a lack of transparency on the continuing education market. A comparison between east and west Germany shows that there are still differences in the evaluation of barriers to continuing education. In the new Federal

HAIL MARIA!

A helping hand for female academics seeking promotion

"I didn't even know that I was PA to the management and had overseen projects", explains 36-year old geography graduate Inge Preiß. Whereas until recently she had applied for internships stating her experience as a clerical assistant and received one rejection after the other, her last application was successful. Thanks to the suggested wording of her colleagues on the course she advanced from a clerical assistant to PA to the management. Without the involvement of the others she would have long thrown in the towel, she says gratefully.

Inge Preiß is one of eight participants on the women graduates' Management Course for International Marketing in Europe (MARIA) in Regensburg, a pilot project of the *Berufliche Fortbildungszentren der Bayerischen Wirtschaft* (bfz) [Vocational Continuing Education Centres of Bavarian Industry], which is designed to encourage unemployed women graduates and women graduates employed in jobs for which they are overqualified to be advanced to responsible positions in industry within the context of the EU Community Initiative "New Opportunities for Women".

MARIA was developed by bfz educational research, which has been involved in a number of projects in vocational education for many years and cooperates with sponsors of education in all Member States of the European Union. In Bavaria the continuing education initiative is represented at 27 locations. The MARIA pilot project is currently running in Erlangen and Regensburg with financial support from the EU. The aim of the course is to prepare promotion-oriented women graduates with an arts or social science background for managerial and decision-making activities in industry. For this reason, the nine-month compact course in particular includes business economy subjects such as marketing, personnel management, communications and law.

In the continuing education, the six-week internship phases are to the fore. Every graduate of the course was assigned to a company by bfz for the entire duration of the course. The participants have the task of using the time in their companies for implementing major projects under their own responsibility. Today, the MARIA participants are coming together after the second internship unit for a day of reflection intended to help the exchange of experience. In particular, the participants in the course will have the opportunity to speak to the mentors and course leaders about any problems in the companies. Their contacts are Brigitte Muhlbauer and Regina Albrecht from bfz, as well as Gudrun Wanninger, Commissioner for Women's Affairs at Regensburg employment exchange.

After the initial problems with applications, Inge Preiß was more or less able to hold her own in her internship company ITTS, a company for electronic technology systems in Barbing. The first project for the geography graduate was to organise the company's move from Neutraubling to the neighbouring town of Barbing. Not an easy task when 20 members of staff are involved, as she had to admit. Especially when no one else in the company felt responsible for the move. Thanks to the detailed move plan that the intern had drawn up, the move then went off without a hitch. Nevertheless, she found it difficult to convince the company that an intern with a university degree can do more than help out with simple office duties.

Irmgard Rosenmüller also succeeded in this. The 27-year old fully qualified lawyer was taken on at the IT systems company Bechtle. There she took care of organising workshops where customers were to be introduced to new IT systems. Irmgard Rosenmüller has already been able to convince the management of her abilities and how indispensable she is. A

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job is being created for her after the end of her continuing education. The lawyer heard about MARIA shortly after the end of her legal internship. The offer of a supplementary business qualification appeared ideal to her because she could not imagine life as a lawyer or a judge.

By way of contrast, Angela Muller van Ledden found the practical phase in her company to be especially difficult. The art historian did her internship in a restoration workshop near Regensburg. The 40-year old describes the state of the one-woman company as "disastrous". Her boss was terribly "unorganised" and constantly mixed up business and personal affairs, meaning that at first it was almost impossible for the intern with professional marketing skills to create a professional working atmosphere and to allow her knowledge to benefit the company. "Basically, my internship company doesn't fit in the MARIA training profile", says Angela van Ledden and admits that at first she was thoroughly horrified about her internship. But now she considers it to be a challenge.

The former art consultant used to take care of sponsoring projects for major banks before she had to give up her job for family reasons. "I would never have expected the organisers of MARIA to make such a wrong choice of company", she says. After all, the information brochures that she had had from Regensburg employment exchange beforehand stated that women graduates were to be given the opportunity to "integrate in suitable positions".

Course leader Brigitte Muhlbauer explains that she does make every effort to find the right company for every participant when seeking internships. But she does admit that there is no time for more than telephone acquisition. There are no personal talks with managers, never mind visits to the company.

When she offers to send a bfz tutor to help mediate for Angela Müller van Ledden, the offer is rejected. "I want to solve this on my own." Unfortunately, word has not yet spread sufficiently that companies bring in committed support when they take on a MARIA participant. Company acquisition is still very hard work reports Brigitte Muhlberger. She suspects that many companies are frightened off by the European reference of the internship, but without this there would be no grants from the EU.

What is noticeable is that none of the course participants has children. "That's a coincidence. There were three mothers on the last course", says Brigitte Muhlbauer, but she does concede that the mothers found it especially difficult because they also had to organise childcare. Although this is a continuing education course for women, childcare is not taken care of. "There is a childcare supplement from the employment exchange", says Brigitte Muhlbauer, but she does admit that the financial assistance is not enough when no care can be found during school holidays or when a child is ill.

At the end of December the organisers will decide whether the project is successful enough to merit the offer of new courses. Success is primarily measured in terms of the employment rate, and that is good. Six out of eight participants in the last five MARIA courses in Regensburg and Erlangen entered into permanent employment immediately after the end of the course. Nevertheless, Gudrun Wanninger from Regensburg employment exchange cannot yet make any predictions: "The future of MARIA primarily depends on the European subsidies. Among other things, the course is an EU pilot project, the trial phase of which officially ends at the end of December."

If it was up to Irmgard Rosenmuller, the course would continue to be offered. "For university graduates like me, who have no knowledge of industry whatsoever at the end of their studies, MARIA is the ideal opportunity for getting a foot in a company's door."

Länder the continuing education opportunities in the immediate vicinity and career opportunities without continuing education were evaluated as much worse than in the old *Länder*. More people questioned in the east German *Länder* (46%) than in the west German *Länder* (34%) believed that they did not have a good overview of the continuing education offers. However, the difference here has fallen considerably since 1991 (66% v. 42%).

From its surveys on the participation of Swiss adults in continuing education, the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics concludes that "the level and degree of distribution of continuing education do not yet show any signs of a change in society." Continuing education does not offer much opportunity to break out of traditional roles. On the contrary, continuing education is implemented while observing traditional limits and is not a compensation and harmonising instrument for missed opportunities in basic training. Much rather, existing selection mechanisms were being reinforced and social inequalities cemented. The educational and social status of parents, and thus the educational climate in the family greatly determined the educational success of children and young people. For adults, the extent, quality and level of initial training had a major influence on continuing education conduct.

With her initiative "Lifelong Learning for All", Federal Education Minister Bulmahn is showing that she believes the situation in Germany to be similar, but intends to help break down this deficit among the less qualified with targeted programmes of action. It remains to be seen whether the objectives of the Social Democratic Education Minister can be successfully implemented.

PHOTO: JACHTENKE-HEDT

SPONSORS AND FORMS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Current estimates that want to shed light in the darkness of the confusing array of German continuing education total around 35,000 sponsors of education. The term sponsor refers to organisations or institutions that offer their facilities for continuing education.

The description of the continuing education landscape according to sponsor areas primarily comprises the sponsors of continuing education more or less dependent on the major social organisations. Of these, 2,000 are state recognised and publicly funded facilities, 1,000 adult education centres and just as many church, trade union and public law facilities of the chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, as well as private basic and continuing education centres affiliated to them. Furthermore, there is a large network of private institutes, academies, seminar providers and personal trainers who offer vocational continuing education in the form of personal or distance teaching. Moreover, the many in-house and external staff training courses should not be forgotten either.

The most important adult education facilities in Germany are:

- Academic societies and associations
- Universities and polytechnics
- Distance learning universities
- Private facilities
- Distance learning institutes
- Radio and television companies
- Churches
- Trade unions
- Vocational schools, technical schools, technical vocational schools
- Adult education centres
- Federal Institute for Employment
- The state and local authorities (administrative academies for the public sector)
- Economic associations
- Associations of economic interests
- Chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts
- Industry academies
- Economic enterprises.

The plethora of continuing education scheme offers in Germany is so great that any attempt for a sensible overview ultimately remains unsatisfactory. It makes most sense for each person interested in continuing education to acquire information about providers and offers from the competent regional offices. A first point of call is the employment exchange and its careers information centre. In some places there are also continuing education advice centres that are very familiar with the regional offer of continuing education providers and also know about any funding opportunities. Good points of call also include the advice centres of the chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts. Suitable educational offers can even be found from home via various databases on the internet, e.g. KURS, the database of the Federal Institute for Employment or WIS, the continuing education information system of the chambers of industry and commerce.

Currently in Germany there are several hundred recognised continuing education professions, from "Sales and Advertising Executive" to "Socio-psychiatric supplementary training", which are either

licensed by the Federal Government, the competent chambers or the *Land* governments. An overview of all of these continuing education courses is available from the Chamber of Industry and Commerce or the Chamber of Skilled Crafts.

A major problem in the search for suitable continuing education schemes is the fact that apart from state recognition there is still no binding seal of quality for all continuing education schemes that provides reliable information on the seriousness and quality of a course. Only the indication that a course is supported and funded by the state can currently give someone interested in continuing education any hint of the general recognition of the course. This does not mean that all other continuing education courses are not serious. We should just bear in mind that the subsequent market value of the certificate of a continuing education scheme not funded by the state is much more difficult to assess than that of an established provider, recognised by the state as worthy of funding.

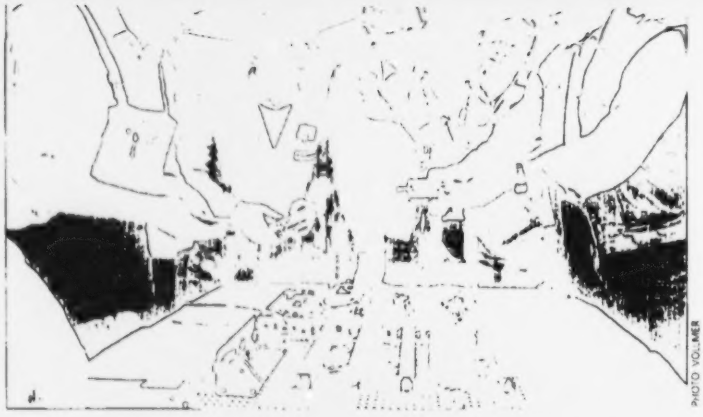


PHOTO VOLMER

The main continuing education providers in the last category include the adult education centres, protestant and catholic adult education, the chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, the Federal Institute for Employment and the state funded vocational and specialist academies. There are now also any number of private sponsors of continuing education schemes that are funded by the state and have the relevant recognition.

Continuing education at work

The addressees of education at work are people who work in the company. The subject of education at work is all possible demands that may result from handling technology, planning and realising

Facilities funded by local authorities

The most well-known continuing education facilities include adult education centres. As local authority facilities or registered associations affiliated to the local authorities in question, they are public institutions. Their sole organisational goal, to which they are publicly committed, is to provide a comprehensive offer of continuing education. Their work follows the principle of openness: i.e. their courses are open to all who are interested in continuing education as well as to all subjects and philosophical and political opinions. The broad offer of contents comprises language lessons, career-related courses, creative leisure opportunities and sociocultural education. The adult education centres and their work are financed from participation fees, grants from sponsors and funds from the Federal *Lander*.

Facilities funded by the state

Continuing education sponsored by the state encompasses the continuing education offers of technical schools, polytechnics and universities. The towns and local authorities maintain evening intermediate schools, grammar schools and colleges as facilities of the second educational route. Moreover, the *Bundeszentrale fur politische Bildung* [Federal Centre for Political Education] and *Landeszentrale für politische Bildung* [*Land* Centre for Political Education] are also funded by the state. They perform their tasks by distributing media and continuing education offers for "multipliers" of political education.

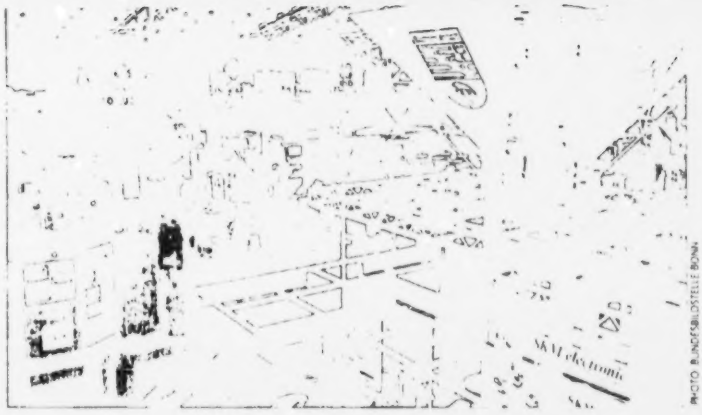
The technical schools and polytechnics are supposed to intensify and extend vocational specialist education and further general education. Access is linked to certain entrance qualifications, such as completed vocational training or practical vocational experience.

The trade unions as sponsors of continuing education facilities

The emphases of the continuing education work of the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* [Federation of German Trade Unions] lie in the field of training for members and employees and vocational continuing education. The offers are oriented to the interests and educational needs of the employees. Seminars and courses are carried out in the organisation's own educational institutes and specialist schools. The costs of trade union educational work are largely borne by the Federation of German Trade Unions and the individual trade unions. Participants' fees do not play a significant role.

purchasing, sales and administration. All forms of work design, cooperation and management are also included in the subjects of continuing education, with which the employees have to cope through learning. 85 per cent of all German companies offer vocational continuing education to their employees. In 1993 just under one quarter of the employees from the sectors of commerce, catering, banks, insurance and the manufacturing industry took advantage of these offers by their companies and took part in at least one continuing education course or seminar. Other forms of continuing education at work, such as information events, learning opportunities close to the workstation and self-controlled learning were pursued by an average of 28 per cent of employees.

Vocational continuing education, which costs the companies a lot of money but is a sensible investment in the company's future, is the cheapest and most convenient way for employees to keep up to date in comparison to other forms of continuing education.



The training courses for "normal employees" are usually concerned with passing on skills that are needed for their immediate area of activity. These are therefore introductory courses relating to jobs and subject matter, adaptation continuing education, technology and know-how transfers, work training and supplementary qualifications. Large companies usually carry out special company or supra-company management seminars and courses for managerial staff. The trigger for offering continuing education courses can be very specific changes within a company, e.g. the introduction of new technologies or a change in the computer system, tapping into new markets, changes in the law, large numbers of complaints, etc.

The churches as sponsors of continuing education facilities

Values resulting from the Christian understanding of the world and people are decisive for the educational work of the protestant and catholic churches. Offers on theological, musical-cultural, social and political subject matters are supposed to contribute towards the life orientation of the participants. The focus of church continuing education work is in the field of personal and social education.

At Federal level all church continuing education facilities are brought together in Federal working parties. *"Deutsche Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Erwachsenenbildung* (DEAE)" [German Protestant Working Party for Adult Education] and *"Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für katholische Erwachsenenbildung* (BAG)" [Federal Working Party for Catholic Adult Education]. Church adult education is financed by grants from the churches, participants' fees and state grants.

Industry as a sponsor of continuing education facilities

In addition to companies, the chambers of industry and commerce, the chambers of skilled crafts and countless business, employers' and professional associations are active as sponsors of continuing education. They maintain separate departments or institutes for this purpose. Around half of all training schemes in industry can be assigned to company continuing education, around two thirds of which is carried out within the companies' own facilities. At supra-company level a large number of educational institutes from the chambers, guilds, industry associations and supra-company affiliations carry out training schemes. Vocational-company continuing education conveys vocational skills demanded by the technical and economic changes and the increased demands of employees' communications and management conduct. The continuing education in this sponsorship sphere is largely financed by the economic enterprises, associations and chambers.

Commercial sponsors

From the "solo fighter as a specialist" to the "large-scale provider as an all-rounder", in this sponsorship field of continuing education there are the most varied organisational structures. A widespread organisational form is the one-woman/one-man business acting as a training institute. They offer company-specific seminar and training concepts as services as well as consultancy services at management level in the field of organisational and personal development. The central issues are working techniques, management, sales and communication techniques. The commercial providers are under a great compulsion to make their mark because they usually cannot make such inexpensive and broad-based offers as the public law sponsors who receive grants from the public sector and financial support from member companies.

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Vocational continuing education is usually carried out in an organised form in industry and the administration. It aims at maintaining and developing personal performance among the employees and leads to a further development of the companies and administrations when the acquired skills are applied. In the long term, a company performs only to the extent that its employees are willing and able to perform. Although vocational training safeguards the acquisition of fundamental vocational skills, it is only continuing education that guarantees the specific, activity-related qualification of the employees. Technical change, a change in products and improvements in production methods require on-going continuing education. This fact results in the central importance of vocational continuing education to a company's personnel policy.

Supplementary, complementary or consolidating courses

The offer of postgraduate courses is growing in Germany from year to year and is spreading to ever more disciplines. Consolidating courses for university graduates lead to qualifications such as "Bachelor" or diploma, a master's degree, e.g. "Master of Engineering", "Master of Science" or "Master of Business Administration (MBA)". Most of these supplementary courses have an international orientation and are taught in English. The acceptance conditions are stringent: a very good degree, an excellent knowledge of English and, above all, professional experience of one to three years are the usual requirements for admission. MBA courses in particular are offered by numerous public and private educational establishments. Postgraduate courses with an international orientation may be of interest to more than just economists, business economists, engineers and natural scientists. They are also offered for graduates in the social sciences and the arts and, in these cases, pass on social science or cultural skills.

The "Master of Business Administration (MBA)" is a postgraduate course of study in the field of management. It is an international postgraduate qualification with an economic orientation. It is an alternative to a PhD or other postgraduate courses that is not just suitable for economics graduates but also for all other academics who want to acquire the relevant qualification to progress into top management. In the experience of continuing education specialists, people who complete MBA courses are usually faced with outstanding career prospects.

However, the teaching concept of the MBA leaves it up to the students to see how they finance their postgraduate studies. Those whose companies contribute to the training and release them for it are lucky. You have to calculate between DM 30,000 and DM 70,000 for a course of studies for one to two years. There are practically no grants. However, according to a recent judgement from the Federal Finance Court in Munich, a postgraduate course of this kind can be offset against tax. People with MBAs are in demand for management consultancy in accountancy firms, in the finance departments of internationally expanding companies, in foreign companies who are expanding in Germany or in companies that are reorganising and cutting specialist staff, among others.

According to estimates of the Federal Association of German Employers, around 220 MBA programmes are on offer in Europe alone, but the nature and quality of them differs greatly. In order to find which offer is suitable, interested parties should contact the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA) and have the relevant rankings sent to them.

The *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* [Conference of University Vice-Chancellors] regularly publishes updated comprehensive overviews of postgraduate courses in Germany (including distance learning). A complete overview of the large number of offers can be found on the internet at: http://hochschulkompass.hrk.de.

THE NEW MEDIA – THE CURRENT ISSUE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

No subject dominates the continuing education market currently as much as the new media. As the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics calculated, 27 per cent of all participants in vocational continuing education in Switzerland attend courses that teach skills in the field of IT.

The continuing education report of the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research also confirms the importance of acquiring skills in the field of the new media. "The online trend is now making massive inroads in the education system", notes the expert in vocational and adult education Martin Massow and cites the nationwide project *"Schulen ans Netz"* [Schools Online], called into being by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in order to enable multimedia and telematic learning for all schoolchildren in Germany (cf. Education and Science 3/2000). The Education Ministry in Saxony has gone so far as to set up a training and advice centre for educationalists in which teachers can get fit for modern multimedia technology. After all, the German school and education experts are convinced that without the use of information and communications technologies at school, the apprentices and students of the future will not be able to prepare themselves adequately for the labour market. This makes the current labour market situation all the more difficult for apprentices and graduates who have not been made familiar with the new media world and information technology at school or during their studies. It is therefore hardly surprising that continuing education offers in multimedia are springing up like mushrooms.

PHOTO DOKUMENTATION

AN INSTINCTIVE FEEL FOR ALTERNATIVE CAREERS IN IT

Vocational qualification by the Nuremberg University Team

The University Team at the Federal Institute for Employment in Nuremberg considers academics to be an "especially sensitive group" among those seeking employment. Not, however, because they are highly qualified and nevertheless hard to find jobs for, as Roland Lutz, coordinator of the ten-person team, explains. It is just the opposite because their opportunities on the current labour market are better than ever before. For people finding jobs for academics, this, in turn, means that someone who is assigned a managerial position by the Employment Office today is a contact for new applicants tomorrow.

Contrary to the generally prevailing opinion that even applicants with university degrees are having problems on today's labour market, Roland Lutz and his colleagues believe that even students who have failed to complete their courses are in demand more than ever. Provided that they have completed a continuing education course that qualifies them as specialists for the relevant sectors of the future. In the opinion of his colleague Herbert Auer, who was a businessman and a construction entrepreneur before his time at the employment exchange, these sectors primarily include IT and the health market. With this assessment, they are following forecasts by the *Rheinisch-Westfalisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung* [Rhine-Westphalian Institute for Economic Research], which predicted that the current number of jobs in the IT sector would double to almost 800,000 in the next ten years. Of the 395,000 people currently employed in the IT sector, 35 to 40 per cent received their qualifications via continuing education schemes from the Federal Institute, emphasises Roland Lutz.

Roland Lutz and his academic work consultant Herbert Auer have now been working together in the Federal Institute for Employment for eleven years. With their close linking of continuing education and finding jobs in the University Team, which was established four years ago, they have set standards for the whole country. Each year the Nuremberg University team develops and realises around eight innovative qualification profiles for academics. Added to this are usually two other profiles contributed by their colleagues in general employment arranging. In four years that is forty new professional qualifications for academics.

It is not surprising that the University Teams from other regions are now basing their way of

PHOTO: OEHLER

An interview with two experts who not only encourage unemployed academics, but also make them specific proposals for qualifications.

The labour market for academics is better than it has been for a long time according to you from the University Team in Nuremberg. Why are you making all these efforts in the field of continuing education, then?

Lutz: The world of work for academics has changed rapidly in recent years. The days when a medical student became a doctor immediately after his studies and a student of German became a German teacher are long gone. Nevertheless, the thorough academic training of a graduate, regardless of what they have studied, continues to be in demand. What most of them do not have today are specialist qualifications that allow them to enter the new booming branches of industry. This is where we offer qualification bridges with relevant continuing education offers.

How do you intend to draw attention to alternatives?

Auer: In November 2000 we organised the trade fair *"Wachstumsmarkt Gesundheit"* [Growth Market Health], where we exhibited alternative jobs for medicine graduates, pharmacy graduates, scientists, computer scientists and engineers together with many different companies.

working on that of Nuremberg. With an arrangement rate of 70 per cent, Roland Lutz and his team help between 630 and 840 academics to find employment after a continuing education or retraining scheme. 70 per cent of all of these schemes are in the IT sector, 85 to 100 per cent of whose graduates go on to find a job.

The most successful projects that the Middle Franconican team has brought into being in addition to these many continuing education offers to gain professional qualifications include the fora for new recruits to the labour market with integrated company contact fairs, IT consulting and graduate fairs. For example, around 140 companies from all sectors and spheres were represented at "Akademika 2000", a *"Job-Messe fur den Karrierestart"* [Jobs Fair for Launching Careers] in Nuremberg in June 2000. "We got extremely positive feedback from the companies", says Herbert Auer proudly and in his down-to-earth way sweeps away all clichés of dusty work mentality. "I enjoy getting rid of the bureaucratic stuffiness" he explains as he opens his office window.

If even these graduates need a helping hand to enter the world of work, what are the chances for an arts graduate?

Lutz: Even for arts graduates whole new professional opportunities have opened up thanks to the development of the New Media, however most of them cannot be pursued without relevant continuing education. For this reason we are trying to attract arts graduates to jobs in the IT sector and are also offering relevant continuing education courses for online editors or online researchers. Unfortunately, many arts graduates are still a little afraid of anything to do with technology or computers although not every IT company is looking for programmers, and are often seeking people with marked communicative skills.

Are you also among the critics of the university curricula, which mostly have nothing to do with work?

Lutz: No. What characterises us as a University Team is the instinctive feel that means we don't want to make a student of German into an economic scientist while he is still at university. We don't feel it is our job to scare the horses. After all, every sort of thorough academic training is justified and is expected as a requirement by most companies in the IT sector. Ignoring the often demanding contents that have to fill the internet, a CD-ROM or any other new medium, the communications and team skills taught at universities are what the IT sector expects from its applicants.

Where do you see the opportunities for lawyers and students who have failed to complete their courses on today's labour market?

Auer: There are more opportunities than many see at first glance. We try to qualify lawyers with a knowledge of business economics for managerial positions and, above all, to equip them with the qualities of specialist lawyers. Especially in family and bankruptcy law because these two fields are increasing in importance due to social and economic developments. Another field that is also gaining in importance is e-commerce. Where are the lawyers in Germany with a thorough knowledge of legal issues relating to trade over the internet? Such people are in demand. One of our many continuing education offers is therefore a six-month course to become an e-commerce manager.

Students who fail to complete their courses seem to be a special concern of yours.

Auer: Yes, because they are an enormous potential of young people who think in terms of networks that industry is actively seeking. Unfortunately, they are frequently stigmatised as failures. Wrongly, as many companies now know. After all, as our experience shows, alternative careers can frequently be the better ones. And we have really fantastic alternatives for these young people. We would love to approach this group much more directly. But it is naturally a very delicate matter to gain access to universities to tell potential "drop outs" about their career opportunities.

What training alternatives can you offer to students who fail to complete their courses?

Auer: For example, a nine-month course to become a Multimedia Advertising Businessman or Sound and Vision Web Designer. Together with the *Institut fur Freie Berufe* [Institute for the Free Professions] we are also currently working on developing a course for lawyers that gives them digital skills as needed in specialist legal publishing houses.

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BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A NEW WORLD

Multimedia "driving licence"

Based on Finnish models, at the beginning of the year 2000 the Hanseatic City of Hamburg called into being the "Multimedia driving licence", a continuing education model that is designed to prepare new recruits on the labour market for the demands of the multimedia sector. The initiators of this joint project include public institutions, companies in Hamburg and private sponsors of education, who have come together to form "Initiative Hamburg newmedia@work". A twelve-month course will familiarise school-leavers, students who fail to complete their courses and university graduates who want to start work in the multimedia sector with the most important basic knowledge.

A rabbit is lying asleep under a thick eiderdown. The rhythmic rise and fall of his quilt tells the observer that he is snoring heavily. Behind his rustic wooden bed four coloured, inscribed circles, not unlike speech bubbles in comics, rise into the air. They get stuck under the ceiling: Game 1, Super Dream, Game 2 and Awful Dream are the choices.

"Super Dream, Super Dream!" The participants in the multimedia driving licence course at the Academy for Electronic Publishing (AEP) in Hamburg have made up their minds quickly. Course head Uwe Adlung clicks his mouse on the Super Dream bubble to the left of the picture. Suddenly the rabbit appears on the screen as a sleepwalking rabbit that can fly. Grinning broadly and dressed in pyjamas he glides over a field of ripe, enticingly gleaming carrots.

"How sweet!", "Great". Full of admiration Uwe Adlung's pupils note that this cartoon for children is the CD-ROM animation of one of their predecessors. "Using the Director program that I'm going to show you today you will be able to write such or similar scripts." Some of the participants look at Uwe Adlung somewhat incredulously over their monitors.

The 41-year old is only one of many different course heads who is to prepare the participants in the one-year multimedia driving licence course for practice in everyday life at work in theoretical teaching modules. The basics of the Flash, Photoshop and Freehand programs have already been taught to the course before Uwe Adlung introduced the "Director" program today. Other building blocks of the course are web page design with standard HTML editors, image processing, graphics, audio processing, video processing, Java Script, project management and design.

"We deliberately keep the theoretical teaching units short," explains Andreas Giese, lecturer in multimedia at AEP, "because the focus of this driving licence is expressly on practice." The participants therefore spend two thirds of the one-year training period as interns in selected companies and only one third in lessons at the Academy on Kieler Straße. Johannes Rosing, for example, is spending his practical training period in the PR and online editor's office of the multimedia agency "Elephant Seve". There, he writes sector newsletters and familiarises himself with everyday work in the PR department. At 34 he is the oldest participant on the course. After the long training period to become a fully qualified lawyer he decided finally to professionally pursue the fascination he has developed for the New Media, especially the internet. He found out that an applicant with no qualifications in the sector he had absolutely no chance of finding a job in multimedia. He is relaxed when answering a question as to whether he is bothered about the great discrepancies in the ages and previous education of the course participants. "Usually, the enthusiasm of a 21-year old is more carefree than that of a 34-year old. But that has nothing to do with who has the better specialist or technical prior knowledge. After all, as the oldest in the group I haven't brought much more than an affinity for the New Media, either."

The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce specified that the course should be open to school-leavers, students who fail to complete their courses and university graduates to acquire the multimedia driving licence. This is also the body that defines the framework conditions for this course and issues the certificates. Every sponsor of education that wants to offer the multimedia driving licence course, like the AEP, must have it recognised and approved by the Chamber of Commerce. However, the Chamber of Commerce expressly emphasises that the acquisition of the multimedia driving licence is not self-contained vocational training within the meaning of the Vocational Training Act. For participants who have only school-leaving qualifications this course is intended as a transition to an apprenticeship in the dual system. Maret Muddenbohm and Fraisy Manjali Varghese consider it as such. Whereas Maret Buddenbohm studied Indian Studies, Educational Science and Egyptology for three semesters before she decided to give up her studies because of the "disastrous job prospects" and took up the multimedia course at AEP, Fraisy has come along straight from school with her university entrance qualifications. Both want to start an apprenticeship as media designer for digital and print media after completing the course. When Fraisy was asked why she didn't start the apprenticeship immediately after school, she spoke about her frustrating experiences of applications. "Without any previous knowledge you don't get an internship in a company, and with-

out any experience as an intern you don't get an apprenticeship. It's a vicious circle." Neither of them can confirm the prejudice that the very young multimedia sector is open to absolute beginners. And they know why: "The sector is booming. No one has any time to teach interns."

Nicole Bornemann from Hamburg newmedia@work, one of the initiators of the multimedia driving licence, is well aware that the project cannot yet be one hundred per cent fully developed. She views the multimedia driving licence as a pilot project that will have to be gradually adapted to the needs of participants and companies. At the same time she emphasises that the course should not be misunderstood as a replacement for basic training. On the contrary: this initiative should encourage the multimedia sector, which is very timid about training, to think about training opportunities and to offer them. She is convinced that the needs of the multimedia sector on the one hand and the timidity of potential apprentices on the other urgently need an initiative of this kind.

MULTIMEDIA IN CHILDREN'S ROOMS

Vocational continuing education for teachers in child daycare centres

Although there are hardly any children's bedrooms without some sort of computer games lying around nowadays and many parents are unsure about how to deal with their children's enthusiasm for the media, teaching how to deal appropriately with the new media is not yet part of state recognised training for kindergarten teachers. Many kindergarten teachers therefore now feel that they are no longer up to the everyday demands in kindergartens because they have hardly any experience with the medium of the computer or don't know who they can help parents and children in dealing with it. Experts in media education such as Ulrike Six from the University of Koblenz-Landau warn that children who are not trained to deal with computers, television, video recorders, etc. at an early age are exposed to mental and even physical risks. They are therefore committed to media education being included in the training process of kindergarten teachers so that the children are taught about the benefits and risks of the media world even in kindergarten and uncertain parents can gain expert advice at the kindergarten.

"Scrub, scrub, scrub!" The small, grey, mouse-like fellow on the scrubbing brush has now been surfing into every corner and angle of Findus the inventor's kitchen for ten minutes, squealing with pleasure. But the longer he dances over the floorboards, the more impatient Marianne Beer and Michaela Krembs are becoming with their shared computer game *"Findus wartet auf Weihnachten"* (Findus is waiting for Christmas). "There must be some way of getting the chap out of the kitchen", swears Marianne Beer to her colleague from the *Bayerische Landesschule für Körperbehinderte* [Bavarian Land School for the Physically Handicapped], who is resolutely trying out all sorts of tricks with the mouse. "You can try that for as long as you want", seminar leader Hans-Jurgen Palme finally tells the two teachers at the Munich child day care centre. "You can't get to the next game until tomorrow because of the in-built day limit."

The two kindergarten teachers are two of forty educationalists to gather initial experience with computer games for kindergarten children and to get fit for media skills in the kindergarten in the "Multimedia at the Kindergarten" continuing education project. The continuing education project has been running since 1999 under the auspices of the Munich association *"Studio im Netz"* (SIN) [Studio in the Net] and the Gustav-Stresemann-Institute in Bonn, a recognised continuing education facility of the Land North Rhine-Westphalia. The project is supported by the North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry for Schools and Continuing Education.

The founder of the Munich association is the course leader and media educationalist Hans-Jürgen Palme, who has been advocating a "computer play area" in as many child care centres as possible since 1997.

First of all, it is very important for him for a child to understand and get to know computers as toys and not as work machines, as adults do.

As a result of these convictions, Hans-Jurgen Palme and his association *"Studio im Netz"* advocates that children should be introduced to the multimedia world while they are still at kindergarten. This aim, Palme is convinced, can be achieved only with continued and continuing education of educationalists in child and youth cultural work. However, most kindergartens, in Palme's experience with the participants in his continuing education courses, do not have a so-called "computer play area". It is therefore his objective not only to teach kindergarten teachers how to introduce children to the new medium responsibly, but above all to make sure that their facility get a "computer play area".

Thomas Hohmann, teacher at the German Red Cross "Kumulus" kindergarten in Dusseldorf actually succeeded in this. Immediately after attending a continuing education seminar organised by Hans-Jurgen Palme in Bonn he did everything to convince his sponsor to procure a new computer for the children. Because, and this may initially be surprising, many games can only be played on the newest computers. Palme and Hohmann therefore warn their teaching colleagues against accepting discarded old computers from supposedly generous companies who want to save expensive disposal costs. Because usually you can't install even the simplest computer game for children on the old computers. This is because computer games usually comprise data-rich drawings, graphics, tunes and narrated stories. And that is precisely where Hans-Jurgen Palme sees the attraction of a computer game for children: many of the children's senses are addressed and, unlike with television, the children can actively react to this and intervene in the game.

But the participants of Hans-Jurgen Palme's continuing education seminar in the Gustav-Stresemann-Institute in Bonn are also visibly fascinated by the computer games for children. Even when the official part of the first seminar day is long over, many teachers are still sitting in the computer room and trying out the many games with names like *"Oma allein fur mich"* [Grandma to myself], *"Das Zauberhaus"* [The Magic House], *"Löwenzahn"* [Dandelion], etc. It is precisely in this fascination that these games arouse in adults even where media educationalist sees the great opportunity for the conviction work of his participants. "You will be most successful if you involve the parents in the project from the very start. Organise parent's evenings on the subject of multimedia at kindergarten, invite them to project days where the parents can play on the computer. And you will be amazed how many critical parents rapidly drop their prejudices." As an aside, Palme points out that this subject is especially suited to finally get fathers – usually conspicuous by their absence – into kindergartens.

LIFELONG LEARNING AS AN ISSUE FOR EDUCATION POLICY

In January 2001 the Federal Ministry for Education and Research launched a "Lifelong Learning for All" action programme, with which the Government intends to identify clear goals and fields of action for the way towards a "learning society".

Lifelong learning must not remain a buzzword", explains the Federal Minister for Education and Science, Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD), and adds: "With this action programme we want to make continuing education attractive to all people. Only with constant learning will it be possible to shape everyday life, keep a job or embark on a career." Funding for continuing education has been increased by one third since 1998, from around DM 100 million to DM 150 million now. Added to this are European Union funds obtained by the Federation in the amount of just under DM 50 million per year.

The Minister believes that an understanding of the importance of lifelong learning cannot and must not be forced on the people. Even at kindergarten the stage must be set for learning how to learn. Disadvantages must be dismantled and new barriers to access to educational offers must be prevented. Moreover, she feels it is important for all educational offers to meet high quality demands. "The new knowledge should be certified for the labour market and be recognised by employers." Another new challenge for continuing education were New Media and the internationalisation of everyday and working life.

The Federal Government's new programme of action should bring together the Federation's research, development and pilot measures into the individual educational areas that serve to promote lifelong learning. In future, the following will be given priority encouragement:

- interdisciplinary interlinking of the various spheres of education and sponsors at regional and supra-regional level
- quality assurance in transparent and comparable methods
- certification or recognition of qualifications and skills that can be used at work, even those that are acquired in informal learning processes, i.e. outside special facilities
- increasing the transparency of continuing education offers
- new teaching and learning cultures (e.g. self-controlled learning)
- using new media
- encouraging the willingness of people in specific circumstances to take part in education, also at work
- strategies to pass on skills to the unemployed
- intensifying exchange and international cooperation
- international skills

"In a time of rapid change, lifelong learning is used not only to overcome personal deficits. It is the response to the question as to how the required innovation potential can be secured in an ageing society. All educational facilities in a learning society therefore work together, each with their own contribution to continuing education. The guiding principle includes new means of self-controlled learning and associated consultancy methods in learning agencies. We are in favour of a plurality of sponsors in the field of continuing education. The CDU calls for the establishment of an independent "Stiftung Bildungstest" to create transparency, openness, quality and consumer protection in continuing education. It should enforce recognised standards in continuing education."

Annette Schavan (CDU), Education Minister of Baden-Wurttemberg, on the introduction of officially recognised standards in continuing education

Federal Minister Edelgard Bulmahn is convinced that continuous continuing education after good basic training serves all talents and personal development. It is an important foundation for actively overcoming the structural change, securing innovation in society and is thus the most important capital for encouraging employment. "Lifelong learning does not end with completion of vocational training. Continuing education is essential in all phases of life."

The continuing education concept of the Alliance for Jobs

In February 2000 the working group on basic and continuing education of the Alliance for Jobs decided on a joint concept with specific steps for the expansion and qualitative further develop-

ment of vocational continuing education. The Alliance for Jobs is an alliance of unions, employers and representatives of the Federal Government that has set itself the objective of greatly increasing participation in vocational training in order to be at the top in international competition. All employed people, especially adults without vocational qualifications as well as people for whom training at work has so far been unusual or unfamiliar, should benefit from the continuing education concept. But the Federal Government also wants to increase opportunities for the unemployed and people who are temporarily not working for other reasons, e.g. men and women on parental leave, to get back into the developments in the world of work more easily.

The Alliance initiative has set several emphases. Due to the constantly increasing transboundary mobility on the international labour market, German continuing education qualifications should become more transparent in future. The contents of and qualifications from the courses should be described in a way that is internationally comprehensible and transparent. In this connection, the Federal Government also intends to extend the exchange of skilled workers within the European Union.

In future, unemployed people should be offered the opportunity to gather work experience in several companies thanks to "job rotation" so that they get to know the world of work and become attractive for the labour market again. Moreover, all those interested in continuing education should be given the opportunity for independent learning with the new media. Another important concern for the Alliance for Jobs is quality assurance in vocational continuing education. In the interests of more transparency, similar chamber regulations of continuing education sponsors should be replaced by Federal ordinances. This would also have the advantage that potential employers would be better able to assess the applications of job seekers from different regions and use them for themselves.

Encouraging talented students in vocational training

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research's encouragement programme *"Begabtenförderung berufliche Bildung"* [Encouraging talented students in vocational training] has been in place since 1991. Its aim is to get closer to the equality of general and vocational training. Because Federal Minister Edelgard Bulmahn is convinced that there are "talented young people not only at grammar schools and universities, but also in companies, hospitals, surgeries and administrations". Special performance in professional experience is just as important as in academic or artistic work and deserves equal recognition and encouragement.

"Begabtenförderung berufliche Bildung" encourages talented young skilled workers who want to qualify for their jobs through continuing education. Today the programme helps a good 13,000 grant recipients. It supports young people who decided on a career with an apprenticeship in the competition of the educational paths. Surveys have shown that a good third of those helped have achieved improvements in status and income after two to three years of continuing education. Many have taken on more interesting and demanding jobs after the help. There are reports that in the last few years former grant recipients have taken part in twice as much vocational continuing education as is usual for working people of the same age. This means that encouragement for talented students promotes the willingness for lifelong learning.

Qualified graduates of dual vocational training who are younger than 25 when they start the scheme can receive help. Applicants for a grant must have a vocational qualification of better than "good", particularly successful participation in a supra-regional vocational performance competition or a justified proposal from a company or a vocational school. The grant recipients choose their scheme themselves, the competent Chamber decides on whether they are suitable for assistance. For up to three years the Federal Ministry for Education and Research pays DM 3,000 per annum to finance continuing education accompanying work. On the spot the programme is implemented by those offices responsible for vocational training, usually the Chambers.

The European Union's Leonardo da Vinci Programme

Great importance is attached to continuing education at European level, was can be seen in particular in the European Union's vocational training programme "Leonardo da Vinci", which is now entering its second phase. This means that it has been extended by a further period of six years from 2000 to 2006. Its funding volume amounts to € 1.15 billion.

Behind this programme is the idea of education politicians to create a European educational area in which all citizens can learn and train further for all their lives. In the second phase of "Leonardo da Vinci" the tendency has been established for vocational training to be placed in an employment policy context in future. The three objectives of the programme make this new direction clear:

1. Improving the abilities and skills of young people in vocational training to encourage employability
2. Improving the quality of continuing education and access to the lifelong acquisition of skills to increase adaptability to technological change
3. Encouraging the contribution of vocational training to the innovation process in order to reinforce competitiveness and the entrepreneurial spirit

(cont. on p. 29)

"THE DANGER OF MISSING OUT"

Interview with Matthias Berninger

Continuing education is experiencing a new heyday. Continuing education is the engine in a society that wants to learn for its whole life. The online editor of *Forum Bildung* [Education Forum] in Cologne talked to Matthias Berninger, member of the German *Bundestag* for *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* [Alliance 90/The Greens] about saving for education, job rotation and the role of the internet in continuing education.

How important is continuing education today?

Berninger: Very important. I believe that people under 35-40 years of age will already be affected by changes in the world of work. They will have serious problems without intensive continuing education. The precondition for all changes in the world of work and economic success is the fact that we give people continuing education. The second important point is demographic development. In 20 years time the majority of all employees will be older than 40, one third older than 50. Neither must we forget that in Germany people with a high level of education use continuing education much more than those with a low level of education. That is why practical offers should be made to people on low incomes.

That also need to be financed. What do you mean by saving for education?

Berninger : In our opinion saving for education should occupy the same status as schemes for saving for a house and capital-forming payments. These are welfare payments for people earning up to DM 70,000 per annum. This group is already the group that shuns education and also runs the risk of "missing the boat" with continuing education, too.

The problem with saving for education is that every party seems to understand something different by it?

Berninger : I can tell you precisely what the Greens mean by it. Saving for education is designed for a period of a few years. The employee's contribution amounts to DM 780, the employer's to DM 624 per year and the state then adds 30% of the total. Basically, our proposal is like the schemes for saving for a house, only with a higher state contribution and a shorter term.

PHOTO: GRAMINSHOT

As a saver for education can I choose where I spend my money?

Berninger: I would like a continuing education market where the providers identify themselves with a certificate stating that they can use the money from the saving for education scheme.

... and the certificate would come from the fictitious "Stiftung Bildungstest"?

Berninger: A *"Stiftung Bildungstest"* would have the task of drawing up quality criteria for the continuing education market as a whole. It would also have to be specified what education sponsors actually make sense – whether pottery or a pilot's licence, for example, are appropriate as continuing education schemes. Ultimately, the consumer should have relatively simple criteria according to which he can choose. What is good about saving for education is that the individual also feels great responsibility because he or she has also saved. I believe that this saving philosophy is very important.

The Greens also demand that job rotation be made a regular measure. What is this?

Berninger: Job rotation makes it easier for companies to do without employees who are doing continuing education for a long time. The state funds transitional jobs and thus also allows the replacement people to do continuing education. Model projects in Rhineland-Palatinate have been very successful.

In the IT sector, for example, it will probably be difficult to find alternatives for the specialists?

Berninger: Job rotation is not practical for high potentials, only for people with fewer qualifications.

Will job rotation and continuing education go hand in hand in the future or are there other options, too?

Berninger: Job rotation will not be the only way, because realistically most people will not be able to leave their job for continuing education. The internet will become very important in this context – because employees are free from time and location restrictions there. However, the potential of the internet is far from being exhausted in the educational sphere. As a Government, we are spending a lot of money on notebook universities and developing new teaching software. The internet will be the key medium for practical continuing education.

The interview was conducted by Udo Loeffler for Forum Bildung online

"Leonardo da Vinci II" should support and supplement the vocational training schemes of the individual states. All public or private organisations and institutions that take part in vocational training measures have access to this programme. The projects are chosen once a year by the Member States. For example, continuing education courses to encourage people's mobility in their careers, pilot projects to encourage innovation and quality in vocational training or the establishment of transnational networks that help in the exchange of experience and work practices are being supported.

Unlike "Leonardo", which mainly deals with work-related questions of basic and continuing education, the European Union's "Socrates" programme deals with more general themes of adult education, such as languages, academic exchanges and youth education. "Socrates" pursues the aim of encouraging cooperation between adult education institutions in the European Member States and, thus, the quality of European adult education.

The examples of German adult education projects supported by the EU within the context of the "Socrates" programme between 1995 and 1997 include a scheme that deals with adult education in prisons. The extension of linguistic and communications skills should improve the resocialisation opportunities of foreign prisoners and reintegrate them in life outside the prison walls.

Furthermore, "Euromed" was supported, an adult education facility that organises seminars to increase European awareness of the history of Europe. Euromed tries "to overcome the past with educational media and to shape the future in Europe".

The third example is "Basic". "Basic" gives a general basic education to the semi-literate and takes on literacy measures. Furthermore, it develops models for autonomous learning and for encouraging personal development recognised in Europe to aid the integration of the illiterate in society and at work.

PHOTO BUNDESBILDSTELLE BONN

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Due to the lack of state regulation of the German continuing education sector, this sector is characterised by the lack of a uniform certification system that could offer both participants and providers of continuing education schemes a qualitative basis for comparison.

A uniform certification system exists only within an association (e.g. the adult education centres) or other groupings. The degree of usefulness of the qualifications is therefore not always guaranteed. But it is not only within Germany that the lack of transparency in the quality of continuing education offers is a problem. The globalisation of labour markets makes new, internationally useful and comparable certificates essential if employees want to have a chance on the international market with their continuing education qualifications in the future. Whether at the *Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft* [Institute of German Business] in Cologne, the Board of the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (GEW) [Education and Science Trade Union] in Frankfurt or the *Bundesverband Deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände* (BDA) [Federation of German Employers' Associations] in Dusseldorf, people agree everywhere: something will have to be done about quality assurance of continuing education in Germany. The weak points are the quality of teaching staff, equipment, curricula and teaching media, the comparability of qualifications and the links between initial training and continuing education. However, there is still controversy about which way is the right one for quality assurance. Critics such as Green politician Armin Oertel believe that regulation in law is indispensable: a Federal Framework Act should lay down minimum standards in order to systemise continuing education and make it more consumer friendly. In contrast, Jobst Hagedorn from the *Bundesverband*

PHOTO: LICHTENSCHEIDT

Deutscher Arbeitgeber (BDA) is not at all happy about the idea of regulation of the market by law. Legal intervention would destroy any dynamism that is decisive on the continuing education market. In the long term, this would jeopardise Germany as a place to do business.

Whatever form the political debates on this issue take: within the last few years various bodies made up of education experts, academics and companies have formed that have developed quality criteria for certain areas of continuing education.

The Accreditation Council

After passing the amended Universities Framework Act of August 1998, which makes provision for the trial introduction of postgraduate courses leading to "Bachelor" and "Master" qualifications in order to facilitate access to the international labour market for German university graduates, the Conference of Education Ministers decided to establish an Accreditation Council in Bonn. The body comprises 14 members (representatives of the Federal *Lander*, the universities, students and work practice) and is to develop a quality-assuring accreditation process for the newly introduced courses to guarantee high-standard postgraduate courses in line with the international labour market for students, employers and universities.

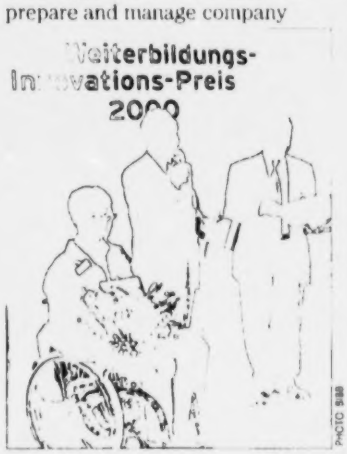
The aim of the Accreditation Council is to contribute to securing quality in teaching and studies by drawing up minimum standards for the above-mentioned courses. It defines the new courses, coordinates technical-substantial assessment by agents taken on specifically for this task. The agents commissioned by the Accreditation Council are authorised to issue the Accreditation Council's certificate. The academic and organisational realisation of the courses is to be proved by the universities making the application, as well as the fact that they can be financed, which must also be confirmed by the *Lander* as sponsors of the universities or, in the case of non-state universities, by their sponsors. State approval of a course is not affected by its accreditation. Neither should accreditation lead to a standardisation of the services and offers of universities that offer these postgraduate courses, but just identify the transparency and comparability of these services, according to the resolutions of the Accreditation Council. When a Bachelor or Master course is being assessed, the training function and ability to study should also be tested, especially with regard to the employability of the graduates and how they can be deployed in possible professions.

The Continuing Education Innovation Prize

The name of the *Weiterbildungs-Innovationspreis* (WIP) [Continuing Education Innovation Prize] of the *Bundesinstitut fur Berufsbildung* [Federal Institute for Vocational Training] and the magazine "managerSeiminare" says it all: visionary continuing education schemes that get employees fit for the changing world of work are sought. The prize was awarded for the first time in May 2000. Around 200 training providers took part in the competition with their concepts. However, because of the "equal merit of the submitted contributions" the jury decided not to award the first prize worth DM 10,000. Instead of this, two second prizes of DM 7,500 each, one third prize (DM 5,000), two fourth prizes (DM 3,000 each) and one fifth prize (DM 1,000) were awarded.

The second prizes were won by "wheelchair training" and a "Web Master" distance learning course. The concept of the wheelchair training entails letting people who have to prepare wheelchair occupants for a life in a wheelchair really "experience" the demands made by everyday life in a wheelchair and the problems that wheelchair occupants have to cope with day in, day out. The course sees itself as a supplementary qualification for therapists, wheelchair manufacturers, physiotherapists, nursing staff and personal carers for the disabled. The WIP jury classified this continuing education concept by prize winner Sabine Hubner as a forward-looking innovation because the approach of learning by experience (of self) creates important transfer opportunities for vocational training in service professions.

The "Web Master" remote learning offer organised by *Studiengemeinschaft Darmstadt* [Darmstadt Study Community] addresses mainly young people new to the subject without a relevant university qualification who want to acquire qualifications in the expanding employment fields of the internet and e-commerce. It is the task of the web masters to prepare and manage company



internet sites in such a way that the company can present potential customers with a professionally designed offer. What the WIP jury especially praised about this continuing education scheme was the pioneering teaching method mix of virtual learning arrangement associated with multimedia learning and integrated learning using print materials as well as intensive personal mentoring.

The third prize in the competition went to the continuing education course to be a dental consultant offered by INtem trainer group in Mannheim. It is the task of a dental consultant to determine a patient's needs by talking with them, to offer them possible solutions in line with their needs and to explain the proposed dental treatment. The objective is to provide relief for the dentist. The requirement for this course is completed training as a dental nurse, dental technician or in clerical or administrative professions within dental surgeries. The

WIP jury justified its award to the continuing education as a dental consultant because the course increases the attractiveness of the healthcare professions. Furthermore, it opens up a new field of employment that is oriented to customers and services.

The background to the idea of a prize for innovative continuing education courses was the initiators' thought that ever more classic professions are considered to be outdated and new fields of employment, such as the internet and e-commerce, emerge over night without it being possible to provide them with appropriately trained skilled staff in time. Nowadays, the initial training of an employed person can pass on core qualifications at best. In the course of his thirty to forty years of working life, however, he constantly has to face up to the constantly changing world of employment. An innovative development of continuing education is therefore indispensable. The *Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* therefore intends to encourage pioneering concepts and present them to the general public with the Continuing Education Innovation Prize.

"Continuing education offers that are still the exception today and can give an indication of what will be standard in vocational continuing education tomorrow", is how BIBB Secretary-General Helmut Putz summarises the purpose of the prize. In the medium term he hopes to get market information on future qualification requirements on time before time-consuming "qualification after the event" for workers will be necessary. The next Continuing Education Innovation Prize was announced in July 2001 and will be awarded in February 2002.

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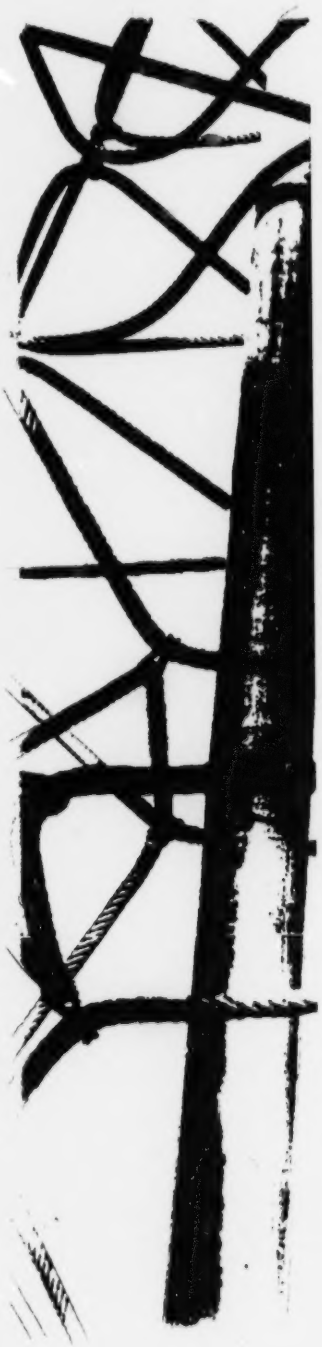

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